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★ KRISTIAN WHATLEY ★

WIDE OPEN!

THE BRITISH CHAMPION ON WHAT IT TAKES
TO BE A WINNER AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL

JEREMY VAN HOREBEEK | CHRISTOPHE NAMBOTIN | TONY SKILLINGTON

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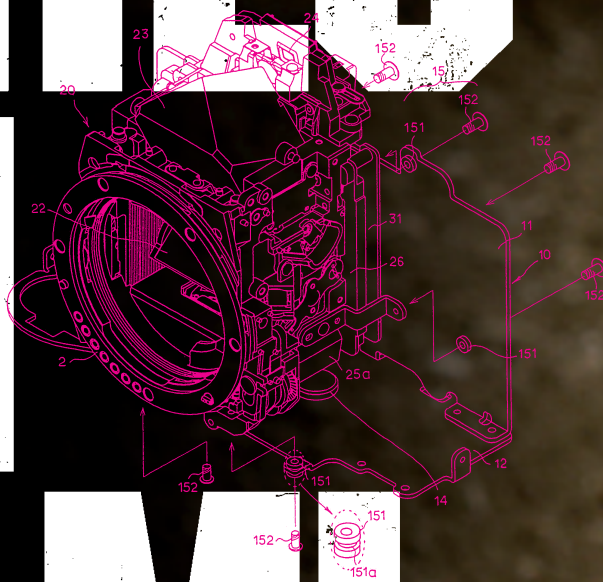
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A CUSSES GORSE HOLEY
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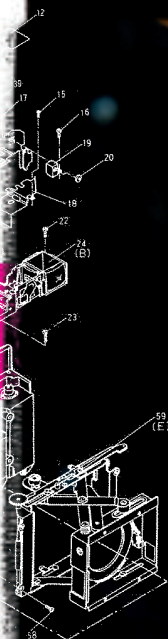
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Photos by **Sarah Gutierrez**





20-year-old Yamaha star
Kiara Fontanesi added a third
world title to her collection



R RATED!

ED BRADLEY RECKONS HONDA'S 2015 MX MODELS ARE REAL RIPPERS...

Words by **Ed Bradley**

The gorgeous Gallarate circuit in Italy was the venue for the launch of Honda's 2015 machines where I quickly discovered that subtle changes to the new 250F and 450F models have had a powerful impact on the overall packages.

From the outside the 250F looks like its only had a sticker change to look a little more like the factory bikes. It still has dual silencers, the same mass centralisation and Renthal bars but three new components and a couple of extra bits make this bike loads better than the 2014 model.

The first of my favourite updates is the bigger 260mm front brake disc – hidden behind a redesigned white cover – so stopping the 250F will be easier than ever. The second, biggest and best update on the MX2 machine is the 49mm Showa SFF-AIR TAC front suspension.

Separate Front Function Air Triple Air Chamber forks are the nuts and Honda/Showa have added to the design by having the air fork – for spring rate adjustment – on the left-hand side. To do this the balance chamber is housed inside the fork so there is no need for the external chamber (the other triple air chamber forks have external chambers and can only be



*Lean and mean, the 2015
CRF450R is a winning machine*

GREEN DAY!

ARE THE 2015 KX-FS INTERNATIONAL SUPERHITS
OR SIMPLY A STEAMING PILE OF DOOKIE?

Words by **Ed Bradley** Photos by **Double Red**

We started our journey for the 2015 Kawasaki 250F and 450F test with a long drive and a night stop at a small hotel before arriving at the circuit first thing in the morning – just like a normal test for us, only this time we arrived at Cheddar MX in Somerset.

It's a natural track with different elevations and some fun-looking jumps and after a heavy downpour we arrived to find the track had been power-harrowed and was in awesome condition with the dirt looking super-tacky.

The Kawasaki four-bangers feel great to sit on because they're slim and tall and you have a lot of adjustability with the four different handlebar positions and two footpeg positions. The colour looks great and I'm digging the black rims. The only blip for me is the 1990s exhaust guard on the header pipe!

I'm definitely a happy chappy when it comes to front brake updates because the 250F is fitted with a new 270mm oversized disc which is ace because it means that compared to this year's stocker you can improve on your braking distances with the same amount of squeeze – and it has a better looking wave pattern too!

Chassis wise the frame is almost the same – a slight material modification means there is a saving of a few grams in weight. The Uni-Trak linkage has been modified so there is a longer suspension stroke

giving you more precision when altering the clickers and providing better traction at the rear wheel. The rear shock has been re-valved to firm-up the stroke to improve high-speed stability and heavy landings, as has the front end.

The firmer valving is installed into the second generation SFF forks and added by increasing the fork diameter to 48mm from 47mm. These new forks have the compression joint rod inverted so that the cylinder is positioned at the top of the fork and the rod pipe at the bottom. With the previous model when you added oil to firm-up the last part of the stroke it would also affect the initial part of the stroke too so you would have to make a sacrifice at one end of the stroke or the other. Now though there is a more progressive increase in the damping so you can improve the bottoming resistance without changing the ride quality elsewhere in the stroke.

Along with other minor updates the forks also produce a smoother action with less friction.

The engine has received a couple of updates too. I'm a fan of the KX250F's Dual Injectors because they give a great throttle response straight off the bottom when you crack the throttle open and it's nice and crisp. The injectors produce a finer atomizing spray with a wider angle from four holes compared to the previous two and the ECU mapping has been altered to suit this and slightly heavier flywheel weight.

The bridge-box bottom piston has a thicker under-surface reinforced with thicker external ribs to



THE WAITING GAME!

WE CHECK OUT THE BRAND-NEW MX VS ATV GAME TO SEE IF THE THREE YEAR WAIT FOR ITS ARRIVAL WAS WORTH IT OR NOT...

Words and photos by **Max Hind**

Earlier this year we took a close look at the development of 'MXGP: The Official Motocross Videogame'. At the time we said that was to be the first of two brand new motocross video games to be hitting the shelves this calendar year.

Now, as we hit the heights of summer and the kids are off school, eager to find something to banish the boredom we are back shredding the digital dirt to give you guys an In-depth look at 'MX vs ATV: Supercross' – the latest title in the multi-million selling franchise. After a three year hiatus we're positive that the game will be welcomed back with a yell of applause.

But why the long wait? Well it's fairly simple. The previous publishers of MX vs ATV – THQ – went bust meaning that the beloved series was sent to the video game graveyard. Thankfully someone heard our prayers and in 2013 Nordic Games acquired the franchise from THQ. They then mustered a small team of MX vs ATV veterans and immediately started production on their latest project...

Just over a year later and we're meeting in central London with Nordic Global PR manger Philipp Brock and Rainbow Studios/ MX vs ATV licensing manger and producer David Knudsen – who had literally just flown in from Phoenix – to get the lowdown on the new title as well as shred a lap or two!

DBR: Could you please tell us a little about the journey so far and how 'MX vs ATV: Supercross' has come to be?

DK: "Fans of the franchise will be aware that the last game 'MX VS ATV: Alive', came out quite a while ago. We've been gone for three years now and to be honest we're just really happy to be back. Nordic games acquired the rights from THQ when they filed bankruptcy in 2012 I believe. Then Nordic games, along with Ken George and Chris Gilbert, found a bunch of us from Rainbow Studios and put the team back together again and we started making the game.

"We're really excited about this one coming out – usually we have about 50 people working on the game with 18 months to two years of production time. This time around we have done it with just 12 of us, most of us being

Rainbow employees before, so we have worked with each other and have a history as a team.

"I think what we have achieved in such a small amount of time is going to show through in the final product that everybody gets to play. We've been spending a lot of time with each other but we are having a blast doing it and we can't wait for people to get playing the game!"

DBR: Moving on to the game itself. With Nordic now in charge of MX v ATV, do you guys consider 'Supercross' to be a continuation of the franchise or a complete reboot?

DK: "Nordic have been a great partner and a great publisher. They have really given us a lot of free reign to do things that we have always wanted to do in the MX vs ATV game. And they have also had some great ideas of their own that we have incorporated into the game as well. We really think that this is a great union between the two companies for some great games to come out, starting with this one and hopefully moving onto a lot more in the future."

DBR: With that in mind, what features of the game will be brand new and fresh for the player? And what will we be familiar with?

DK: "When the team got back together and started looking at the game we revisited all of the previous titles. We really took a long hard look at what made each game fun, what worked and what didn't work. We talked with people in the industry and with professional riders and asked what they've really enjoyed in the series and we have really tried to capture those aspects within the new game.

"People that have been fans of the game all these years will find elements and remnants of all four of the previous titles in this new game. As well as this we have a couple of brand new features, for example this game will be the first time that we have actually included a manual transmission as one of the controller presets and we are really excited about that. Also we have brought back the 'preload' feature from the Unleashed and Untamed days.

We still have the real time terrain deformation from Reflex and Alive and the terrain will degrade and change over time, opening up new lines that may not have been there before and closing off old lines that you may have started out using. It's really going to add to that unique

racing experience where each race is going to feel different and then if you race online it's also going to give you a different experience each time you race the track."

DBR: Could you give us a quick overview of the new game as well as something juicy that will really get the fans excited?

DK: "We are really happy with this game. There isn't a whole lot of information out there just yet at this point but there are a few things that I can tell you..."

"This time around we have a career mode. We have 125cc bikes, 250s, 450s and ATVs as well as a couple of hidden jewels in there. As you progress through the career we have a 250 East coast and 250 West coast series that you can play on both MX bikes, ATVs or mixed and then we have the 450 championship which is a 17-race series.

"As you go along you'll be able to upgrade your vehicle, customise your vehicle and customise your rider. We have over 80 companies from the off-road community that have signed up and we are really excited to be working with them and they are really excited to be working with us. We have just been really overwhelmed and thrilled with amount of the support and excitement that we have been receiving from the community.

"In addition to being able to customise your rider the player will also be able to select from over 60 professional riders from the sport to play as if they would like."

DBR: You mentioned the career mode features a 17-race championship much like the real life Supercross championship. Was this a conscious decision?

DK: "We did a 17-race series to really give the player a great experience into what off-road racing is really like with the supercross races. We also thought that 17 different tracks would make for a really full game for the player to play through."

DBR: Do the real life SX events inspire your team in terms of track design?

DK: "All of the tracks in this game are original tracks designed by our in-house track designers. We have one track designer that has been around since the motocross madness >>>





THE MXGP

GRANDMASTER

WE GET THE LOWDOWN ON THE NEW MAN
WHO'S MOVING THE PIECES AROUND THE MXGP
CHESS BOARD — TONY SKILLINGTON...

WORDS BY ADAM WHEELER PHOTOS BY RAY ARCHER

Among the silly season rumours and late transfers for Grand Prix this summer perhaps one of the most important names to shift seats was largely overlooked. Tony Skillington's installation as Director of the FIM Motocross Commission (CMS) could be a pivotal moment for the future of MXGP after more than two decades under the stewardship of Dr Wolfgang Srb.

The Austrian was fundamental in the working process with Youthstream to shape the rules and format of the sport as we currently know it. As in any managerial role Srb attracted both plaudits and criticism.

There is little doubt that the FIM Motocross World Championship actually looks and feels more like a world series than ever before and the circuit provisions and safety standards have also reached new heights.

However there were some that disliked the FIM's close proximity to the promoters in terms of decision-making and diplomacy in tackling the groups that constitute top level racing, namely the teams and manufacturers.

The evolving landscape of Grand Prix is something that 58-year-old Skillington has been able to observe and analyse as an effective understudy to Srb. There is now a key, sizeable group who spend hefty budget, time and countless hours on MXGP racing who will be looking to see how the Irishman (born in Dublin and raised in Cork) orientates himself in the paddock and also re-positions the FIM's stance. The governing body depends on seven officials in the MX bureau and another 18 as delegates from 16 federations.

There have already been a couple of symbolic changes. Skillington has decided to base himself in the

FIM jury room as opposed to an office space in the Youthstream truck and has been spotted vetting a spread of opinions with personnel in the MXGP paddock.

As he begins his first term as the political head of motocross at the highest level we thought we'd find out a little bit more about the man who we will come to see and hear a lot more of over the coming years.

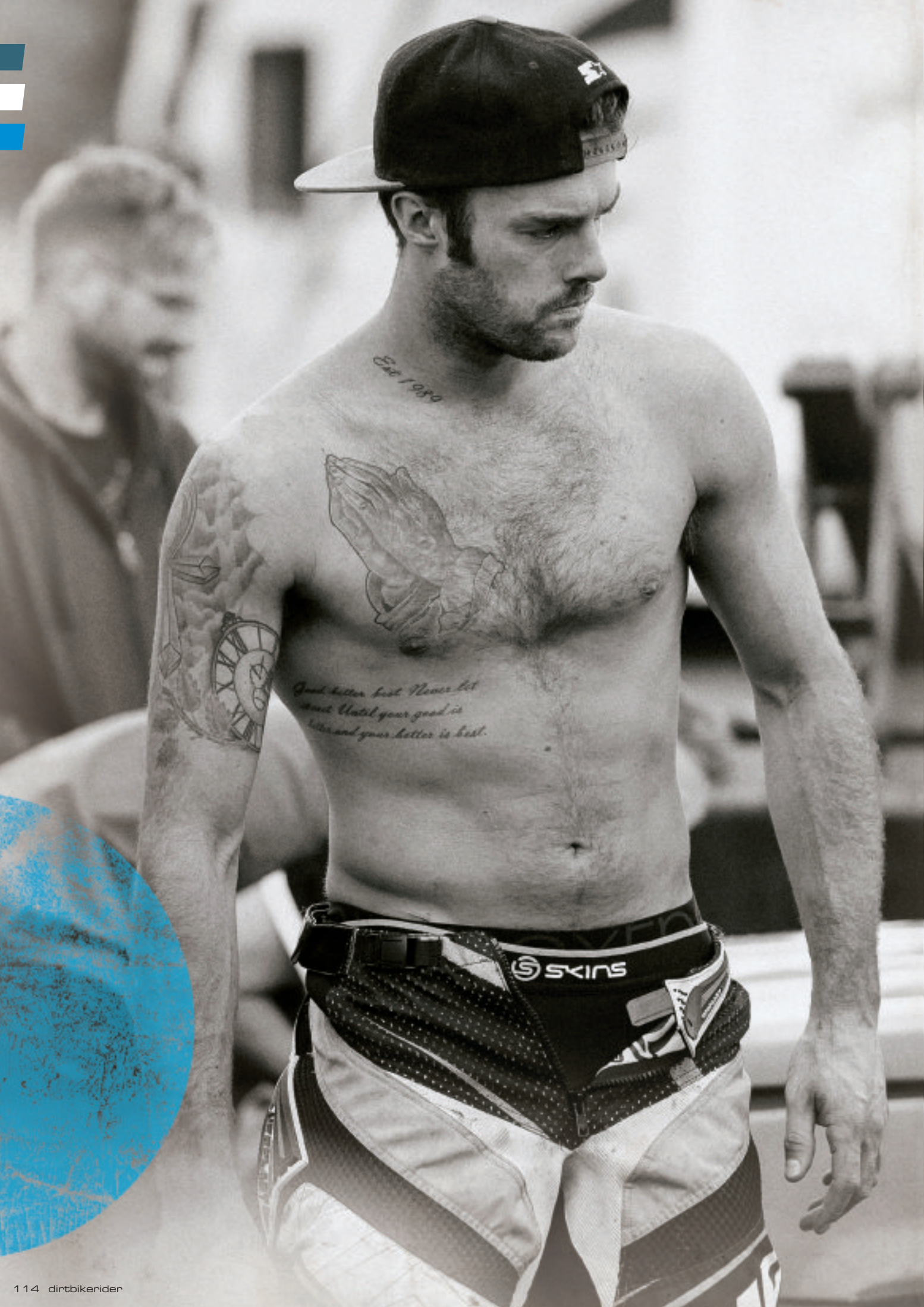
DBR: Tony, what are your roots in motorcycle racing? Where did it all begin for you?

TS: "My interest in motorcycling started when I was six or seven. My brother and my Dad both had motorcycles and since then I have never been without one. I brought a very raggedy looking Dot, a bike produced in the 1950s, when I was 11 and pushed it 11 miles home. That was when the love story began.

"In Cork we had a fine facility called Vernon Mount. We ran a few successful Grands Prix there. As a kid I used to cut grass on Saturdays to get enough money to catch the bus to get to the track. From there I would learn where the next event was and either hitch a ride or scrounge a lift to make it.

"Motocross has been in my life from a very young age. I used to have long hair and travel everywhere with a Honda 175 to places like Hawkstone and Farleigh Castle and would sit there in awe at the riders, the organisation, the tracks and the people involved. I was always a great admirer of the ACU and was fascinated by the traditional ways in which they did everything. I established links there, with the likes of Dave Smith who was a wily character but I always enjoyed his company. He had a great sense of humour and that is something I admire in people."

>>



YOU AIN'T SEEN

NOTHING YET!

AFTER AN ALL-CONQUERING 2013 CAMPAIGN, KRISTIAN WHATLEY HAS HAD TO DIG DEEP THIS YEAR TO OVERCOME A TROUBLED SEASON — IN THE PROCESS SHOWING MATURITY, DETERMINATION AND A STEELY WILL TO WIN. ON THE EVE OF HIS MOVE TO BUILDBASE HONDA WE CAUGHT UP WITH THE 24-YEAR-OLD AND DISCOVERED HE RECKONS THE BEST IS YET TO COME...

Words by **Sean Lawless** Photos by **Nuno Laranjeira**



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